

SECTION II

Crime Index Offenses Reported

CRIME INDEX TOTAL

DEFINITION

The Crime Index is composed of selected offenses used to gauge fluctuations in the overall volume and rate of crime reported to law enforcement. The offenses included are the violent crimes of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, and the property crimes of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

TREND

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of offenses¹</i>	<i>Rate per 100,000 inhabitants¹</i>
1997	13,194,571	4,930.0
1998	12,475,634	4,615.5
Percent change	-5.4	-6.4

¹Does not include arson. See page 63.

Representing the lowest annual serious crime count since 1985, the 1998 Crime Index total was estimated at approximately 12.5 million offenses. Down 5 percent from the 1997 figure, this total represented the seventh consecutive annual decline in the Crime Index. A drop of 6 percent was recorded in the Nation's cities collectively. The greatest decrease, 8 percent, was experienced by cities with populations of 500,000 to 999,999. Suburban counties and rural counties recorded Crime Index declines of 6 percent and 5 percent, respectively.

Five- and 10-year percent changes showed the 1998 national total was 11 percent lower than the 1994 level and 12 percent lower than the 1989 total.

Forty percent of the total volume of Crime Index offenses was accounted for by the Southern States, the most populous area of the Nation. The Southern States were followed in volume by the Western States, 24 percent; the Midwestern States, 22 percent; and the Northeastern States, 14 percent. The Western and Northeastern States showed a Crime Index decrease of 7 percent from the 1997 figures. From 1997 to 1998, decreases of 5 percent and 4 percent were shown in the Southern States and the Midwestern States, respectively. (See Tables 3 and 4.)

The highest number of Crime Index offenses occurred in August. The lowest number occurred in February.

Rates of 4,879 in the West, 4,379 in the Midwest, and 3,474 in the Northeast were recorded. All four regions experienced declines in rates from 1997 to 1998.

A 9-percent decline was recorded in the Western Region; a 7-percent decline was reported in the Northeastern Region; a 6-percent decline was noted in the Southern Region; and a 5-percent decline was recorded in the Midwestern Region. (See Table 4.)

Nature

The Crime Index is composed of both violent and property crime categories. Of the total Crime Index offenses reported to law enforcement in 1998, 12 percent were violent crimes, and 88 percent were property crimes. The property crime of larceny-theft represented the highest volume. In contrast, the violent crime of murder represented the lowest. (See Figure 2.3.)

The total value of the stolen property for all Crime Index offenses in 1998 was estimated at \$15.8 billion. Thefts of motor vehicles accounted for the greatest amount of loss; jewelry and precious metals; currency, notes, etc.; and televisions, radios, stereos, etc. followed. In 1998, law enforcement agencies nationwide recorded a 35-percent recovery rate for dollar losses in connection with stolen property. The highest recovery percentages were for stolen motor vehicles, followed by clothing and furs, consumable goods, livestock, and firearms. (See Table 24.)

Law Enforcement Response

Collectively, law enforcement agencies nationwide made an estimated 2.5 million arrests for Index crimes, recording a 21-percent clearance rate for total Crime Index offenses. Clearances can occur by arrest or by exceptional means when some element beyond law enforcement control precludes the placing of formal charges against the offender. The arrest of one person may clear several crimes, or several persons may be arrested in connection with the clearance of one offense.

Remaining relatively consistent for the past 10-year period, the Index clearance rates in both 1994 and 1989 were the same as the rate for 1998, 21 percent.

A 7-percent decrease in the 1998 total Crime Index arrests compared to the 1997 arrest total was recorded. While adult arrests fell 5 percent, juvenile arrests fell by over twice that number, 11 percent. Arrests of both males and females decreased, males by 7 percent and females by 6 percent. (See Tables 36 and 37.)

The total number of persons arrested for each of the offenses composing the Crime Index was down in 1998 from the 1997 total. Decreases ranged from 9 percent for both robbery and larceny-theft to 1 percent for forcible rape as shown in Table 36.

At over 1.3 million arrests, larceny-theft arrests accounted for the highest volume of Crime Index arrests. (See Table 29.)

Table 2.1

Crime Index Total by Month					
Percent distribution, 1994-1998					
Months	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
January	7.6	8.1	8.1	8.2	8.6
February	7.1	7.2	7.6	7.3	7.5
March	8.2	8.1	7.9	8.0	8.2
April	8.0	7.8	8.0	8.0	8.1
May	8.4	8.4	8.5	8.4	8.4
June	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.5	8.5
July	9.1	9.0	9.1	9.1	8.9
August	9.3	9.3	9.1	9.0	9.0
September	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.6	8.4
October	8.7	8.8	8.7	8.7	8.5
November	8.2	8.2	7.9	7.9	7.8
December	8.4	8.1	8.2	8.3	8.1

Rate

The 1998 rate for Crime Index offenses—4,616 for each 100,000 inhabitants in the Nation—was the lowest rate since 1973. For the first time, cities outside of metropolitan areas experienced a higher Crime Index rate, 4,987 per 100,000 inhabitants, than the metropolitan areas which measured a rate of 4,975 per 100,000. The rural county rate was 1,998 per 100,000. (See Tables 1 and 2.) Nationally, the 1998 Crime Index rate fell 6 percent from the 1997 rate, 14 percent from the 1994 level, and 20 percent from the 1989 rate.

By region, the South reported a rate of 5,223 offenses per 100,000 inhabitants, the highest rate of all four regions.

Figure 2.2 Crime Index Total
Percent change from 1994

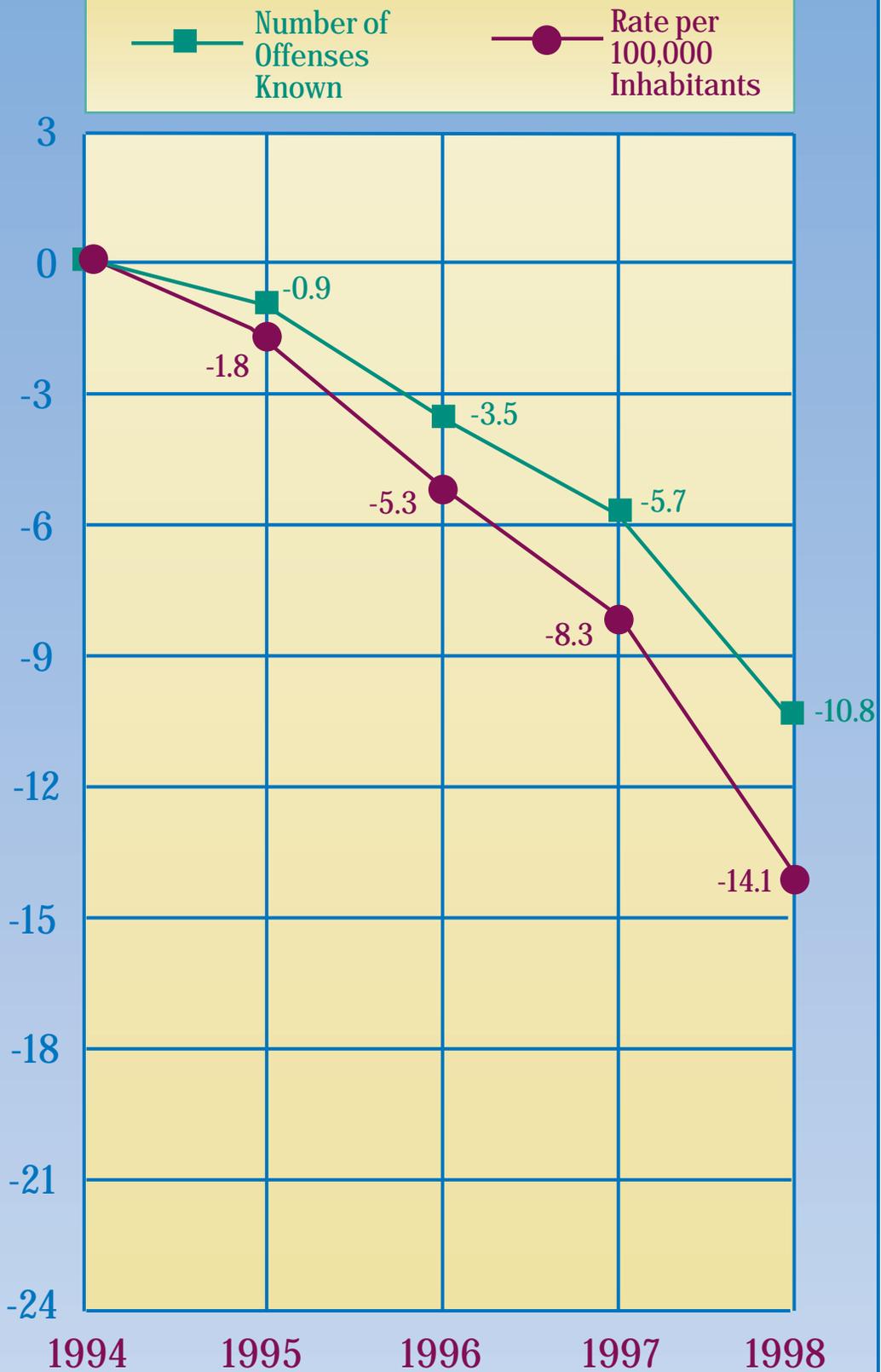
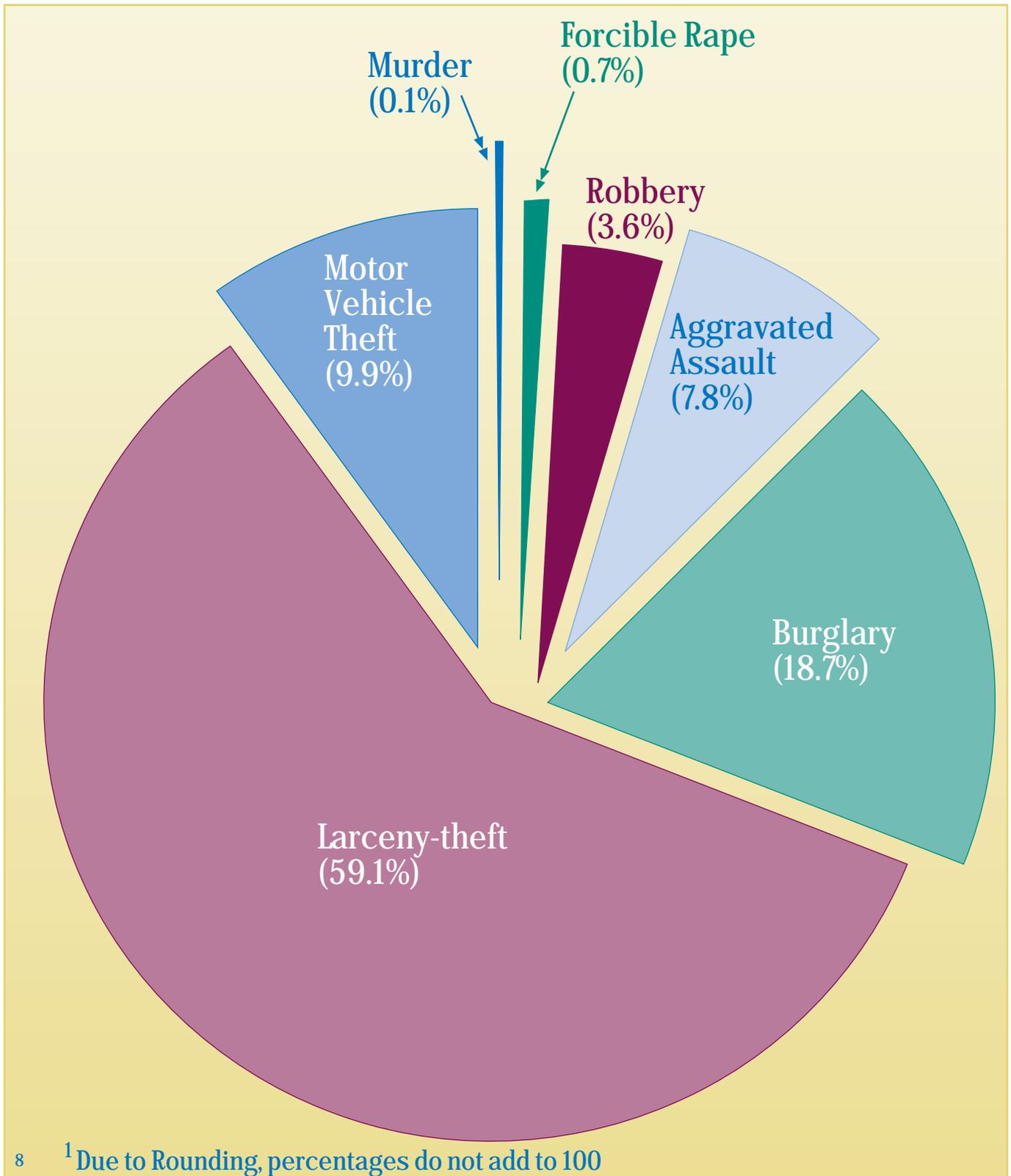


Figure 2.3

Crime Index Offenses 1998

Percent Distribution¹



8 ¹ Due to Rounding, percentages do not add to 100

Figure 2.4

Regional Violent and Property Crime Rates 1998

PER 100,000 INHABITANTS

